CN 2303 FAH file 5-50
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TELEGRAM

INDICATE
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FROM: Amembassy BUENOS AIRES

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL

E.O. 12065: GDS 3/22/85 (HARRIS, F. Allen) OR-P
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJECT: (U) Detention of Jacobo Timerman (116/77/9)

ACTION: Secstate WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO: Amembassy TEL AVIV
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CONFIDENTIAL BUENOS AIRES 2303

REF: State 69331 (NOTAL)

1. C - entire text.

2. SUMMARY: Timerman's brother informed Embassy on March 21 that Jacobo Timerman is planning to begin a hunger strike in April if he is not released. The Timerman family has heard four stories which indicate that GOA leadership is actively discussing Timerman's release. The family's optimism is under firm control as the many previous positive rumors have proved illusory. The Israeli Ambassador has recently been told that an effort to release Timerman is under way.
END SUMMARY.

3. Hunger Strike ------------------------------

Emboff met with Jacobo Timerman's brother, Jose, on

DRAFTED BY	DRAFTING DATE	TEL EXT	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY
POL:FAHarris:sz	3/22/79	278	POL:WHHallman

CLEARANCES: DCM:MChaplin

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CLASSIFICATION

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OPTIONAL FORM 153
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Dept of State

March 21, who affirmed information contained in reftel, that his brother planned to begin a hunger strike to protest his continued illegal imprisonment. The hunger strike would not begin on March 24, the anniversary of the military coup, as this would be interpreted as an anti-government protest, instead of a demonstration for personal freedom. Jacobo Timerman also wants his Rabbi, Marshall Meyer, to be in town during the hunger strike, as he reasons that if he is moved back to jail, the Rabbi has the best chance of maintaining contact with him.

3. Release Rumors-----------------------------------
Jose Timerman stated that the family had received two reports that Army Junta Member Viola, President Videla and Interior Minister Harguindeguy had recently discussed permitting Jacobo Timerman to leave Argentina for Israel during the "last days of March or the first days of April." The Timerman family has received this report from DAIA sources who said the information came from a senior governmental official who the family believe is MinInt Harguindeguy. The second source is Cristina Guzman, former Federalist deputy who presently works for Viola. ?

4. Jose Timerman noted that Air Force Secretary General Lami Dozo commented at a press conference during the

week of March 11 that "someday when you wake up, you will find that Jacobo Timerman is in Israel."

5. Jose Timerman also reported that a message had been received from Jacobo Kovadloff, American Jewish Committee's Director of South American Affairs, that "the ambassador" had asked that Columbia University not issue any invitation to Jacobo Timerman or make any publicity against the Argentine government because Timerman will shortly be able to leave Argentina. Jose Timerman said the Kovadloff report was secondhand and the identity of "the ambassador" was not clear. (For Ambassador Castro's comments to GOA on this case see para 7, BA 2086. He has not been in touch with Kovadloff.)

6. Jose Timerman said that at the beginning of March, Interior Minister Harguindeguy spoke to Israeli Ambassador to Argentina Nirgad about the Timerman case (see para 8 below). At that time, Gen. Harguindeguy reportedly told Nirgad that to strip Jacobo Timerman's citizenship and expel him from Argentina seemed to be both brutal and a bad action politically. Harguindeguy lamented that the GOA could not expel Timerman as he was an Argentine citizen and commented that the other solutions all contained difficulties. (Note: Jacobo Timerman has consistently refused to apply for the right of option stating that application for an option would be construed as a tacit admission of his wrongdoing.)

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(CONTINUATION SHEET)

7. Jose Timerman stated flatly that his brother was planning to begin a hunger strike if he was not released shortly. Jose Timerman noted that his brother and the family were encouraged by the reports of the government's consideration of Timerman's release in late March or early April; however, Jose Timerman noted that the family had been disappointed many times before and their optimism was under control.

8. Contacts with Israeli Embassy--------------------
Israeli Embassy consular officer later confirmed Jose Timerman's account that there have been high level discussions between the Israeli Ambassador and senior GOA officials regarding Timerman's release. The Israeli Conoff said that he would not characterize the Argentine officials' words as a "promise" to release Timerman, but said that his Ambassador was confident that serious efforts were underway within GOA to effect Timerman's leaving Argentina for Israel.

9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Interest-----------
Buenos Aires 2277 reports a discussion at the Foreign Ministry of a possible USG response to Timerman's release.

10. ACTION REQUESTED: Appreciate if Department would pass substance of this message [redacted] to Rabbi Rosenthal

at ADL, emphasizing fact that Timerman does not repeat not plan to begin his hunger strike on March 24. We would also appreciate any further information which the Department is able to gather regarding B'nai B'rith plans to pressure GOA to release Timerman.

11. Cox Reprimanded--------------------------------

Buenos Aires Herald Editor, Robert Cox, told Emboff on March 21 that he had been "called in" by Presidential Secretary General, Gen. Crespi to discuss the recent "Newsweek" article on Timerman detention. Cox noted that the major areas of the Casa Rosada's concern were the story's quote of President Videla saying that Timerman's being a Jew did not help his case and story's portrayal of Videla as a weak President. Cox expressed astonishment to the Embassy at the lack of preparation by Gen. Crespi for the meeting. According to Cox, Crespi was not even aware of the Supreme Court or previous Army War Council's favorable decisions in Timerman case. (Memcon being pouched.)

CASTRO